



proud past, promising future

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Food safety guidelines for summertime picnics**

Vancouver, WA—Picnics and backyard barbeques are a sure sign that summertime is in full swing. But as the temperature rises, so does the number of people who fall ill from food that's improperly prepared or stored. "Summer heat promotes the growth of bacteria that can cause food-borne illnesses. That's why it's important to take extra precautions when preparing and serving food outdoors, away from the convenience of refrigeration and hot running water," said Gary Bickett, Consumer Protection Manager at the Clark County Health Department.

As Clark County residents revel in the pleasures of outdoor dining, they can prolong the fun by observing these food safety guidelines issued by the Washington Department of Health:

- Always wash your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food, after handling raw meat, and before you eat. If soap and water aren't available, use disposable wet wipes or a waterless hand sanitizer.
- If you don't have access to a refrigerator, use a cooler with a tightly closed lid and keep it in the shade. Use a separate cooler for items accessed often. Bring only the amount of food you will eat and try to bring food that does not need to be kept cold or hot.
- Store raw meat in watertight containers away from other food. If taking meat to an off-site barbecue, do most of the preparation at home (forming hamburger patties, spearing skewers, and cutting meat) where you have easy access to soap and water. Use separate utensils, cutting boards, and bowls for raw meat and wash your hands often.
- Chill salad ingredients before mixing potato, macaroni, and other salads containing milk, pasta, meat, or eggs. Once you've mixed the salads, keep them cold until they're eaten.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in running water. Fruits with thick rinds, such as melons, should also be washed since bacteria can be pulled into the edible parts while they are being sliced. Once sliced, melons should be kept cold.
- Cook meat thoroughly. Barbecued meat often looks done on the outside, even when the inside is undercooked. Use a food thermometer to check meat temperature:
  - Chicken - cook to 180°F (or until it has no pink inside)

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## ***Food safety guidelines***

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- Hamburgers - cook to 160°F (or until brown in the middle)
  - Beef roasts or steaks - cook to 145°F
  - Fish - cook to 145°F (or until it is opaque and flakes easily)
- Serve hot foods immediately after cooking. Use a clean plate for foods that come off the grill rather than reusing the plate that held raw meat.
- Refrigerate leftovers within one hour of cooking. If that's not possible, it is safer to throw the food away.

More information on food safety is available on the Department of Health Web site (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/food.htm>), the United States Department of Agriculture (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/hotpacks.htm#Summer>) and the Partnership for Food Safety Education Program ([http://www.fightbac.org/summer\\_brochures.cfm](http://www.fightbac.org/summer_brochures.cfm)).

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